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Securing women through the 'We Can Campaign'

'We Can' is a six-year, six-country South Asian campaign to challenge and change deeply entrenched societal attitudes and practices that endorse gender discrimination and violence.



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The South Asia Campaign to End all Forms of Violence against Women or 'We Can' was launched in 2004 in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Pakistan to challenge and change deeply entrenched gender-biased societal attitudes and practices that endorse gender discrimination and violence.

In these countries, social customs and attitudes tacitly condone and support violence against women, and are entrenched in families and communities. These attitudes are based on a deep-seated social belief that women are fundamentally of less value than men, clearly reflected in the unequal gender norms and socio-economic power structures.

Violence against women is, hence, intense and pervasive, both in the public and private spheres of life, but is completely ignored and unaddressed though it adversely affects individuals, families and the community as a whole. In the largely prevailing 'culture of silence and acceptance', there is no recognition of it as a grave human right's violation. What is worrying is the rise of the crisis in scale and severity.



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Ending all forms of violence against women requires challenging patriarchal power relations -- the sense of 'entitlement' and 'control' over women that men naturally assume. Until society values women and men equally, the violence will not end.

Achieving gender equality may not necessarily end violence against women but it will help establish a more equal power balance that will aid reducing abuse against women. 'We Can' has been envisaged as a six-year, six-country campaign to address the root causes of discrimination against girls and women by questioning the ideology that legitimises male domination.

The idea of this ongoing and organised campaign is to break the silence, denial, shame and stigmas surrounding the issue of violence against women and bring it into public domain, consciousness and accountability. (The sixth country, Afghanistan, will launch its campaign in March 2007)



Violence
destroys the
whole family

Though the empowerment of men and women will eventually have to be from within -- where they realise that they have the potential to change their lives and work toward ensuring violence free lives for women -- information, alternate ideas and social values will have to first come and be galvanised through external agents. 'We Can' acts as a trigger for this new consciousness in societal attitudes. It aims to unite men and women into an organised mass movement to transform existing power relations in society.

Change in societal attitudes is not easy to achieve. Violence against women will not end overnight. While reforms in laws, programmes, policies and international agreements support attitudinal change, deeply entrenched attitudes can be changed only by people; large numbers of people who understand the need for

change and initiate the process by raising awareness, breaking their silence and rejecting ideas and beliefs supporting violence against women.

'We Can', hence, currently works in the five campaign countries through a huge band of Change Makers -- people who actively encourage more positive attitudes and behaviour towards women within the communities they live and work -- and uses them as its central force to affect attitudinal change.



Using a direct, personalised, people-to-people approach, millions of Change Makers (with the support of the growing coalition of campaign allies) are currently disseminating information on gender discrimination and violence against women, making visible the underlying power imbalance in men-women relations within families, challenging gender-biased attitudes and stereotypes, questioning norms that 'normalise' violence against women, opening up a dialogue with their friends, neighbours and clientele and generating a public debate.

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More importantly, by making changes in their own relationships, Change Makers are spreading the message that each person has the potential to change within and bring change in the lives of others. The actions of Change Makers may seem small and ordinary but their impact is not -- the gathering momentum of the campaign is evidence.


By 2010, the number of Change Makers is expected to touch five million with each of these five million people reaching at least ten others. The idea is to involve 50 million people in the five countries to oppose violence against women and to symbolically link up to 50 million 'missing women' in the region.



'We Can' is currently being taken forward by over 600 organisations, collectives and individuals in each of the five countries and at the regional level.

Campaign allies are now working on the 'awareness to action' process through highly visible and coordinated public mobilisation programmes, public education events (seminars and workshops), mass media and other innovative means of communication, a variety of institutions (universities, civil society groups, corporate bodies and private enterprises), peoples (students, housewives, teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, businessmen, policy makers, faith-based groups and rural populations, among others) and unique sign-up events and celebrity endorsements.

Attached files

 [PRESSKIT_06_VERSION12.doc](#)
173.00 KB

We Can campaign Press Kit.

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